

## Furman Magazine

---

Volume 57  
Issue 1 *Spring 2014*

Article 17

---

4-1-2014

# The Cothran Center for Vocational Reflection

Furman University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarexchange.furman.edu/furman-magazine>

---

### Recommended Citation

University, Furman (2014) "The Cothran Center for Vocational Reflection," *Furman Magazine*: Vol. 57 : Iss. 1 , Article 17.  
Available at: <https://scholarexchange.furman.edu/furman-magazine/vol57/iss1/17>

This Article is made available online by Journals, part of the Furman University Scholar Exchange (FUSE). It has been accepted for inclusion in Furman Magazine by an authorized FUSE administrator. For terms of use, please refer to the [FUSE Institutional Repository Guidelines](#). For more information, please contact [scholarexchange@furman.edu](mailto:scholarexchange@furman.edu).

141

students participated in the China or Japan Summer Experience from 2005–2013

15

students in the China-Summer Experience in its inaugural year, 2005

20

Asian Studies professors at Furman

5

years of Mandarin offered in the curriculum

\$3 million

funds raised to endow the Cothran Center

#### #WhyFurmanMatters

Furman academics are incredible, but people are what make an organization successful. The combination of Furman's faculty, staff, and student body made for a unique atmosphere that fostered relationships and a support group that I could have never imagined finding anywhere else.

— MATT ALEXANDER '09

## The Cothran Center for Vocational Reflection

### Divining direction

The Cothran Center for Vocational Reflection, originally the Lilly Center for Theological Exploration of Vocation, is designed to invite students, faculty, alumni and the community-at-large to explore the meaning and purpose of life. Begun in 2001 through a grant from the Lilly Endowment, the Center was renamed in 2013 after a generous contribution from John C. '54 and Jeanette Watson Cothran. The Cothran Center serves hundreds of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members, encouraging exploration, nourishing discussion, and providing resources for vocational discernment at key developmental and transition points. Two of the men leading the charge are the Center's Administrative Director David Bost, Ph.D. and Program Director Eric Caine.

#### Why do you think having a vocational reflection center is valuable in today's society?

**DB:** The Center encourages students and the community at large to reflect on their fundamental values. Vocation, in its most profound sense, is all about calling. The Center works with individuals and groups from all faith perspectives to help them discern their authentic voice of identity amid the noise and confusion that many experience in today's society. We provide resources like retreats, lectures, seminars, classes, workshops, and travel, for people to explore their true purpose in life.

#### How does the Center integrate with a liberal arts community?

**EC:** The Center is a natural fit with a liberal arts education because both encourage cross-discipline critical thinking, discerning where you fit in the world, examining your passion and purpose and then blending your passion with your everyday life across careers, citizenship, community, and family.

**DB:** The liberal arts experience stands apart from the others because through its broad approach to education, students are exposed to many different academic disciplines and thus learn to think critically about many different subjects. In virtually every class students learn to process information in a coherent, intelligent fashion and are required to communicate their knowledge, discoveries, and interpretations in systematic and rational ways. The Center encourages this type of reflective thinking.



COURTESY JOHN COTHRAN

John Cothran '54, and his wife Jeanette, provided the naming gift for the Cothran Center for Vocational Reflection, the latest commitment in a decades-long relationship with Furman that has enriched student life and sustained academic achievement. The Cothrans are major supporters of the Partners Fund, which pairs donors and deserving scholars through scholarships and close personal relationships that last long beyond the students' undergraduate careers.

#### What does the Cothran Center offer?

**EC:** We offer many programs and resources for vocational discernment. And obviously our offerings change as the needs of our community change. I don't see our work here in the Center as something extra to Furman life, I see our work as essential to Furman life—helping students, faculty, staff, alumni, friends, and the community always be reflective on their authentic self, their deep values and beliefs, and where they can best help meet needs in the world around them.

#### #WhyFurmanMatters

**DB:** Furman matters to me because it has been a place where I have been amazingly free to explore my own vocational identity as a teacher, scholar and university citizen. Furman has always provided me with abundant resources and opportunities to grow in ways that have been instrumental to my work in Latin American literature, culture and history, all the while encouraging me to grow as a leader both on campus as well as in the community.

**EC:** The interaction with the people is why Furman matters to me. And the sense of community I feel—Furman is a family that stretches across the globe. Furman matters to me because we strive to promote and model a sense of the important things that really matter in our lives along the common human journey.